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AUTHOR Dottin, Erskine S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an example of how an undergraduate foundations of education course is contributing to the conceptual and practical side of teacher preparation. It describes the course, traces its development, analyzes key alignments, and provides reflections on candidate learning with reference to the foundations of education. Ways candidate work may meet the Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies of the Council for Social Foundations of Education are outlined. Among the points emphasized are that an interdisciplinary approach to the course is conducive to helping teacher candidates focus on foundational thinking while providing ideas for classroom practice and that making the standards for the course public through scoring guides (rubrics) makes course expectations clear to students. Also discussed are the role of performance assessment and the usefulness of portfolios. (Contains 22 references.) (SLD)

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Standards, Outcomes, Alignment, Performance Assessment and Candidate learning: Bringing it Together in an Undergraduate Foundations of Education Course

By

Erskine S. Dottin
dottine@fiu.edu

E. Dottin

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Standards, Outcomes, Alignment, Performance Assessment and Candidate learning: Bringing it Together in an Undergraduate Foundations of Education Course

Introduction

The current watchwords in teacher education are accountability, assessment of learning, outcomes, standards, and alignment. The call to arms vis-à-vis the foregoing is coming from different and sundry quarters: state mandates, accreditation standards, subject area organizations, and even teachers' unions. For some in foundations of education, the standards-based movement is simply a new form of orthodoxy. To others, like Steve Tozer (1999), the movement represents an opportunity for foundations of education to provide the necessary sense of purpose to assessment.

So how are foundations courses measuring up vis-à-vis standards, outcomes, alignment and assessment? The shift from the focus on the teacher and his/her teaching to candidate learning is rife throughout teacher education. While methodological courses are quite compatible with the new paradigm, there has not been a plethora of examples of how foundations courses are contributing to the new performance assessment dictum.

This paper will provide an example of how an undergraduate foundations of education course is contributing to the conceptual and practical side of teacher preparation. The paper will provide a description of the course, an analysis of key alignments, etc., and reflections regarding candidate learning vis-à-vis foundations of education. The sharing of the learning and experiences in this undergraduate foundations course is quite timely. Teacher educators at many institutions are working diligently to have their courses be compatible with institutional, state and national standards. They are also developing different and sundry performance measures for their courses.

This paper will provide an example of how this work might be approached in an undergraduate foundations of education course. Furthermore, the author will provide conceptual links to best practices insights gained, and to ways candidate work may meet the Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education, Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies presented by the Council of Learned Societies in Education (1996) now the Council for Social Foundations of Education .

Background Context

The course, Philosophical and Historical Foundations of Education, is part of an initial teacher preparation program at a large southeast urban Research 1 institution. It is a required course for all teacher preparation candidates, and is offered at the junior level of the preparation program. The course number is therefore listed as a 3000 level course, EDF 3515.

The course is offered, three to four sections, each semester, and each section may have an enrollment of 35-55 candidates. The sections may be taught by different instructors, or an instructor may have multiple sections.

Enrollees in the author's course normally exhibit a wide range of abilities. Many are transfers from the local community colleges. A large percentage are elementary, early childhood, special education majors. The majority have not been exposed to foundations of education from a normative, critical and interpretive perspective, and very few have experienced standards-based performance assessment prior to taking the course .

Methodology

Planning the Course with Performance Assessment in View

While the course responds to the paradigm shift in accountability and assessment , it does not embrace the idea of school reform pushed by many legislators, and business people. Reform in a political context, according to Alfie Kohn, assumes that things in schools have gone wrong and must be fixed through external mandates, prescriptions and the use of standards to standardized curricular, instructional and assessment outcomes, that is through high stakes testing (Kohn, 1999). In addition, education from the political paradigm is intended to focus on results, meet workforce needs, and simply be utilitarian in its purpose (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001).

The course instead embraces the notions of "renewal" espoused by Goodlad (1994) and Kohn (1999). In this context, students are seen as multidimensional whole persons to be nourished, and assessment is human-centered.

The course is designed in an interdisciplinary fashion along the lines of the "professional literacy" idea of Jonas Soltis (1990), and the within the foundations of education definitional context suggested by Steve Tozer (1993). Soltis argues that:

> ... foundations must create a genuine quest for answers to perennial questions with the recognition that our answers may not converge and may have to change over time in response to new problems, new insights, and new social contexts. It is why foundations needs to help people see the alternatives available for making sense of curriculum and aims, teaching and learning, schooling and society, and professional ethics (Soltis, 1990, p. 319).

In other words, Soltis argues for foundations of education from an interdisciplinary focus vis-à-vis "... the broad historical, social, psychological, and philosophical dimensions of professional literacy...." (Soltis, 1990, p. 315).

Tozer on the other hand argues that "Foundational study can help teachers construct meaning more adequately, and ...[if] more adequate construction of meaning is important to better teaching, then we will have a clearer sense of both how to select our instructional content and processes for the benefit of the teacher" (Tozer, 1993, p. 14).

My interpretation of Tozer (1993), and the Standards for foundations promulgated by the Council of Learned Societies in Education (1996) (now the Council of Social Foundations of Education) suggests that foundations of education courses should offer teacher and other school personnel candidates an interdisciplinary application of various foundations fields (philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, comparative and international education, educational policy studies) to the purposes of their professional preparation.

Starting with the End in View

Utilizing Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) idea of "teaching for understanding" I began the course construction by considering what candidates should understand in an undergraduate foundations of education course.

My first perusal were foundations texts. These helped me identify basic knowledge categories, for example, thinking philosophically and historically about the nature of the teaching profession, about schools as social systems, about educational governance, control, and support; about curriculum planning and design; future trends; international and comparative and multicultural issues.

My next perusal were the Standards promulgated by the Council of Learned Societies in Education (now the Council of Social Foundations of Education, CSFE). I gained support for an interdisciplinary focus from the standards, but more importantly, I learned from the standards that candidates should benefit from interpretive, normative and critical perspectives on education. More importantly, I learned from the CSFE Standards that, among other things, teacher education candidates and other school personnel should understand/know, be able to do, and be disposed toward the following:

> Understand/Know – understand the central concepts and tools of inquiry of foundational disciplines that bear on the educational process and can apply these to the formulation and review of instructional, administrative, and school leadership and governance procedures; understand and employ value orientations and ethical perspectives in analyzing and interpreting educational ideas, practices, and events; understand how various conceptions of the school foster or impede free inquiry, democratic collaboration, and supportive interaction in all aspects of school life; understand that education includes sensitivity to human potentials and differences; understand that in choosing a measuring device, one necessarily makes moral and philosophical assumptions.
>
> Be able to do – examine and explain the practices, leadership, and governance of education in different societies in light of its origins, major influences, and consequences, utilizing critical understanding of educational thought and practice and of the decisions and events which have shaped them; can use critical judgment to question educational assumptions and arrangements and to identify contradictions and inconsistencies among social and educational values, policies,

and practices; evaluate the moral, social and political dimensions of classrooms, teaching, and schools as they relate to life in a democratic society; can articulate moral and philosophical assumptions underlying an evaluation process.

Be disposed toward – using knowledge from the foundations of education in evaluating and formulating educational practice; examining the normative and ethical assumptions of schooling practice and educational ideas; considering the ontological, epistemological, and ethical components of an evaluation method.

Continuing to follow Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) notion that textbook content provides content knowledge answers, I searched for key questions that would lead to the textbook knowledge and to CSFE Standards requirements. As a result, three major questions emerged: (1) how should teaching and learning be approached? (2) can problem-based learning serve as a means of resolving difficult ethical issues and conflicts in the classroom? and (3) are there valuable lessons from the forces of history for schools and classrooms?

I decided that the three essential questions would guide the three units of study in the course. In pursuing essential question one, candidates would address principle #1 of the CSFE Standards to understand and apply disciplinary knowledge from the humanities, in this case, an understanding of different philosophical schools of thought to develop a personal approach to teaching and learning. In pursuing essential question two, candidates would address principle #2 of the CSFE Standards to understand and apply normative perspectives on education and schooling and principle #3 to understand and apply critical perspectives on education and schooling by using an understanding of different conceptions of ethics to engage in effective problem solving and ethical decision making about classroom practice. In pursuing essential question three, candidates would address principle #1 to understand and apply disciplinary knowledge from the humanities and social sciences to interpret the meanings of education, principle #3 to understand and apply critical perspectives on education and schooling and principle #4 to understand how moral principles related to democratic institutions can inform and direct schooling practice, leadership and governance by using an understanding of the historical contexts in which schooling takes place to develop an historical interpretation of the business creed in schools.

Nel Noddings gives credence to framing units of study in foundations of education around essential questions when she states: "understanding does not have to tied to the basic nature of the discipline. Rather it is properly defined with respect to legitimate purposes, capacities, and interests" (Noddings, 1992).

The next critical step in course planning was to determine the evidence that candidates would show to demonstrate their understanding of each unit's essential question. Relying further on the work of Wiggins and McTighe (1998), I decided that candidates could develop and reveal their understanding of the unit essential questions through any of the following: explanation, interpretation, application, providing perspective, showing empathy or gaining self-knowledge.

In Unit 1 I decided that candidates could show their understanding of how teaching and learning should be approached through self-knowledge. According to Wiggins and McTighe (1998) a self-knowledge task should help candidates develop greater meta-cognition, and recognize their prejudices. The performance task became the development of a personal philosophy of teaching and learning. In Unit 2, I thought candidates might show their understanding of problem-based learning as a means of resolving difficult ethical issues and conflicts in the classroom through application. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) note that an application task requires the use of new problems and diverse situations. The performance task for unit 2 became a problem solving case analysis. In unit 3 I decided that candidates would show their understanding of valuable lessons from the forces of history for schools and classrooms by offering an interpretation of an historical event. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) suggest that in an interpretive task candidates must be asked to interpret texts and situations and provide historical background. The performance in unit 3, therefore, became an interpretation of the business creed in schools. The three artifacts that would make up the candidates' course portfolio would be: (1) a personal philosophy statement, (2) a case analysis, and (3) an interpretive project vis-à-vis the business creed in schools.

To help candidates produce the required artifacts for each unit of study, I had to identify the knowledge, skills, and disposition they had to master in order to accomplish the performance task and produce the products. Those knowledge, skills, and dispositions facilitated the next critical component of a performance assessment system – the scoring guide. A scoring guide is used to provide evidence of candidate learning, and provides benchmarks of quality performance levels. The scoring guide may utilize an analytic or holistic format. I chose the holistic format, and three performance levels: inadequate, adequate, and outstanding performance levels.

It was then a simple task to take the artifacts for the units of study and align them with institutional (the college of education's), state (the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices), and national standards (INTASC Principles). Thus candidates would be able to demonstrate that the performance artifacts they produced in a foundations course are contributing to their meeting institutional, state, and professional standards. This is especially crucial for institutions going through NCATE accreditation. These institutions are asked to align candidate learning with institutional, state, and professional standards (NCATE, 2002).

The foregoing process enables candidates to know, at the beginning of the course, what they have to understand by the end of each unit, the knowledge, skills, tasks to master in order to meet that understanding, and how their final work will be judged.

I finally lay out the learning experiences and activities in which candidates will engage. These experiences and activities are intended to evoke and develop the desired understandings, promote candidate interest, and make outstanding performance more likely. So at the start of each unit of study, I get candidates to review the unit essential question, the performance task and artifact that will serve as evidence of their learning,

examine the relationship between the performance task and artifact and institutional, state, and professional standards. They also explore the pre-requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions that must be mastered before they can produce the unit artifact.

Utilizing best practices

The work of Boyer (1990), followed by that of Glassick, et al. (1997) has led to a redefinition of the term "scholarship." This work has led to a broader and more efficacious meaning of the term, on the one hand, and on the other, offered a new paradigm of scholarship that integrates the discovery of knowledge, the integration of knowledge, the application of knowledge, and the scholarship of teaching.

My application of the scholarship of teaching in the course is thus framed by the following best practice principles about candidate learning and work. That candidate learning and work is more effective:

> When it is focused on clear and worthy goals.
> When models and feedback are provided.
> When candidates/students understand the purpose for the work.
> When clear, public criteria and models allow candidates to accurately monitor progress.
> When ideas are made concrete and real through educative activities.
> When there are built-in opportunities for candidates to self-assess and self-adjust based on feedback.

The emphasis on what candidates/students do instead of what teachers do has also led to a new kind of pedagogy where there is a focus on performance assessment of candidate learning instead of on standardized achievement testing (Iran-Nejad, 1995). Iran-Nejad captures the teacher-directed pedagogy this way:

> In classroom activities where the teacher talks most of the time, the learner is required to exert a great deal of attention (a difficult task), comprehend terms the teacher used (a more difficult task), impose order on the incoming temporal stream of information (an often impossible task), make judgments about the quality and significance of the information (an unrealistic task), attempt to write down as much as possible (a tortuous task), and memorize for later reproduction the information presumed to be important (for most students, the only conceivable task) (Iran-Nejad, 1995, p. 24).

In this course, I work at getting candidates to organize information, explore the learning environment, conduct learning activities, and monitor their own learning. I assume a supportive/reflective role while candidates construct meaning for themselves (Iran-Nejad, 1995). According to Duckworth (1987): "Meaning is not given to us in our encounters, but it is given by us, constructed by us, each in our own way, according to how our understanding is currently organized" (p. 112). Iran-Nejad captures the essence of the foregoing this way: "A child who develop interest in butterflies or baseball comes

to 'know' things about them for personal reasons, just as our distant ancestors came to know about scavenging, hunting, and gathering, or our more recent ancestors came to know about building cathedrals. Repititions of experiences with objects or ideas in the environment form the cognitive structures of the intellect that, always active, can themselves be interrelated internally through multiple sources (Iran-Nejad, 1995, p. 24).

The majority of the learning activities in each unit of study are therefore intended to pique intellectual interest through questions, challenges and cooperative situations. For example, in unit 1, candidates initiate the unit of study by responding to the question "in teaching and learning, what should come first, the subject matter or the student's interest?" They examine and critique their responses vis-à-vis whether they are offering good reasons (justification). They discuss a case in which teachers are struggling with the same issue raised in the case, and concurrently are divulging underlying differences in philosophy. They seek background knowledge of philosophic ideas by working in small groups. Each group reads information in several basic texts on a particular approach to teaching and learning, and is responsible for teaching the rest of the class about the approach. Each group uses a presentation format of explaining the approaches purpose of education, the suggested curriculum to be taught to achieve the purpose, the best methods to use, the identification of basic underlying educational beliefs, the identification of basic philosophic beliefs regarding reality, truth and value. Throughout each presentation, which is usually a power point presentation, I pose questions and clarify ideas.

As candidates become familiar with basic ideas, they complete an online teaching perspective inventory that helps them focus on their beliefs preference. I then get them to read deeper about how each approach they have examined is justified. So they read selected chapters from Plato's *Republic*, Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, Spangler's *Aristotle on Teaching*, and Levine's *From Socrates to Sartre*. They then are asked to come up with a metaphor for teaching and learning, and asked to use that metaphor to develop their personal philosophy statements. The format for the statement that I provide, requires that they not only use a metaphor as a guiding tool, but also that they draw on related schools of psychology/learning theories that are compatible with their philosophical beliefs, and that they draw on primary sources for philosophical ideas (e.g., Plato, Dewey, etc.) to help them support their beliefs claims. They also develop a reflective sheet for the unit artifact in which they describe what they did, how it links to institutional, state and professional standards, and reflect on what they learned and how it will help them in their professional growth. Here is an excerpt from a candidate's work in progress:

> **Philosophy of Teaching Statement**
> **By Olga Fernandez**
> **Introduction**
> As a future educator I've been critically thinking of how I am going to have a positive influence on the children that I will be educating. Thus far the majority of the field experience I've come in contact with, has helped me to reflect in a positive way through the negative things I've witnessed. I've seen how children become passive learners in the classroom and how teachers are insensitive to their

individual needs. This is why I am going to make it my mission to treat each child as a unique individual that has the ability to contribute something valuable to society. Because children are very impressionable, as a teacher I want to provide them with activities that will help them become good democratic human beings. Since, society is continuously experiencing changes, I feel that it is important to focus on current and future issues, so that the future generation can become problem solvers together.

Metaphor

I feel that educating children is like growing a mixed herb garden, where the students are the herb plants, the garden is the classroom, and the teacher is the gardener. Herb plants are diverse in shape and color. Herbs have many traits, they can be edible, aromatic, and medicinal. Some herbs bloom earlier than others, yet they all have the potential to bloom if you can give them individual attention. Since all herbs are different, it is important that the gardener finds out as much information as possible about each species so that they can shine in their garden. Herbs have different likes and dislikes and they can thrive under different conditions. The gardener has to be knowledgeable in all areas of the environment (weather conditions, terrain, etc..) in order to be ready for any needed guidance that the herb may require. This is apparent when the herbs show signs of needing pruning, such as flower shoots, or no signs of growth. The gardener has to take cuttings from the herbs in order for the herb to gain strength and grow. Also, it is important that the gardener provides a nurturing atmosphere, so that the herbs life span can be one that contributes to society and the environment in many delightful ways. Although gardeners need to water the herbs so that the plants will flourish, caution should be taken because to much water at once can cause them to drown, leaving them limp and without the capability of absorbing further nutrients. The majority of herbs prosper when placed next to a certain species, this is why it is important that they are carefully observed when planted and moved around as needed. Occasionally you may have an herb that isn't thriving because of a disease, but if the gardener is alert and provides early intervention the problem can be eliminated or controlled, therefore allowing the plant to reach its utmost potential.

How Learning Occurs

Learning occurs when the facilitator can take what the children already know and are curious about to create a topic of common interest. This is just like the gardener taking the likes and dislikes of the herbs into consideration and giving them a helping hand in their quest for nutrients. The knowledge and experience that the children may have can elicit other children to contribute questions, suggestions, and ideas for further investigation. Through cooperative learning groups, children can make available their experience and knowledge, allowing the students to learn from each other. This creates an atmosphere that fosters problem solving skills, reflective Inquiry, and critical thinking.

This approach is different from traditional methods of learning such as rote knowledge, because it allows children to make sense of what they have learned. This correlates with the ideas of constructivism in that learning is a search for meaning. Therefore, learning must start with the issues around which students are actively trying to construct meaning.

Facilitating Learning Through Teaching

Just like the herbs respond and gain strength when moved around the garden students must experience different environmental conditions. As a progressivist, I feel that in order for children to develop their intellectual self, it is essential that kids directly experience what they are learning, whether through hands-on activities, project-based learning, field trips, or nature walks. For example: If a group of students are trying to learn about wastewater and how it is processed, then the students would acquire more knowledge from a tour of a wastewater treatment plant, or from building a model wastewater treatment plant, rather than the educator standing in the front of the classroom lecturing about it. This shows a relationship with John Dewey's belief that:

Nature's intention is to develop the mind especially by exercise of the muscles of the body. In other words, the aim of following nature means, in the concrete, regard for the actual part played by use of the bodily organs in explorations, in handling of materials, in plays and games (Dewey, 1916).

The case analysis in unit 2 brings to the fore candidates' ability, or lack thereof initially, to draw on professional knowledge to assist them in making problem solving decisions. The case analysis guided by a problem solving process developed by Dottin (2001) is used to enhance candidate's content knowledge about different conceptions of ethics, and case related professional philosophical, historical, psychological, social/cultural, legal, knowledge. The case process utilizes six steps in which candidates identify the problem, the facts in the case, the things ... directly stated in the case but which have a direct bearing on the case, the assumptions being made, the underlying arguments, and their solution to the case (Dottin, 2001).

The interpretive project in unit 3 moves candidates to make connections between past ideas and events and current realities. For example, candidates are helped to identify such ideas as the planter aristocracy in the colonial south being comfortable with social stratification. They then make connections to current schooling realities in school segregation and having different curriculum for different classes of students.

I rely on Dewey's idea that prematurely plunging the student ... into the complexities of responsibility for classroom control and management will preclude achievement of the most important objective of teacher education (Dewey, 1904). Consequently, class activities and field experiences are linked so that candidates are socialized to foundational dispositions of inquiry, reflection, and analysis associated with the outcomes of each unit

of study. This spring, candidates were linked with 5th grade students at an elementary school in Dade County Public Schools. The candidates used their learning of critical thinking skills to help the 5th grade students improve their reasoning abilities. Candidates were thus able to produce a "teacher work sample" of their enhancing 5th graders' reasoning. The New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills provided pre and post test evidence of their success.

Assessment of Learning

On-going assessment throughout the course enables me to understand what candidates are learning or not learning, and as a result be able to utilize candidate feedback for course improvement (Shepard, 2000).

Robert Fitzgibbons (1981) contends that if someone (X) teaches, he/she must teach something (Y) to someone (Z). Furthermore, he notes that there are two different but related senses in which X can be said to teach Y to Z: (1) if X behaves in certain ways with the intention that his/her behavior will result in Z's acquiring Y, and (2) if X behaves in certain ways that actually result in Z's acquiring Y whether or not X has any intention that Z acquire Y. He also points out that the only things that can be taught are propositions (knowledge), skills, and dispositions.

So my teaching, that is, my behaviors in the course are intended to help candidates acquire certain knowledge, skills, and dispositions. My teaching behaviors are intended to help candidates, for example, use an understanding of different philosophical schools of thought to develop a personal philosophy statement. Consequently, I use formative survey tools during unit learning to solicit candidate feedback about (a) aspects of the course that are contributing to or detracting from their learning (b) insights they have gained from the learning and an identification of what they can do with the insights gained – interpret something using the ideas, apply the idea to some practice; and so on (c) asking about my teaching methods that are contributing to their learning and (d) suggestions for course improvement. I provide the class with a summary of their responses and discuss and seek clarification of things they said. I modify my teaching accordingly.

At the end of the unit of study, I solicit feedback regarding my teaching intentions and their learning. Candidates are asked to respond to a survey in which I identify what I intended by the end of the unit of study, and I solicit their feedback about their perceived acquisition of the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions (yes, to some degree or no). I also require that if they say yes, or to some degree in terms of acquired learning, then they must provide related evidence. I also ask them to identify my instructional strategies, methods, etc. that may have contributed to their acquiring the requisite learning in the unit.

The data from the foregoing are providing me an understanding of what candidates are learning, how they say they are learning, my teaching behaviors that may be contributing

to their learning, and most importantly, things I must change in order to enhance their learning.

Some major findings about my teaching and candidates' learning include:

(1) That I am helping them to understand basic philosophic ideas and different approaches to teaching and learning. 70% of the candidates are indicating that they are understanding, while 21% indicate they understand to some degree. The following candidate comments are indicative of their understanding different approaches to teaching and learning:

> "I learned that I favor existentialism and pragmatism. I agree with pragmatism in the sense that there are no absolutes. The world is constantly changing. From an ethical standpoint, I agree with pragmatism in what is moral depends on the good it produces for the society as a whole. I agree with existentialism because this philosophy recognizes the uniqueness of individuals. Existentialists also believe course material should encourage one to examine ... life. Students should have the freedom to choose what they want to learn. I disagree with Realism in the sense that I don't believe there is absolute scientific knowledge. Furthermore, I disagree with idealism. I now believe the subject matter should not come first. I also disagree with idealism in that idealist[s] do not believe all children have the capacity to be what they want to be."
>
> "The idealists believe that knowing is not just sensing 'stuff.' Knowing is actually taking hold of the ideas. Ideas by themselves are only fiction, they need a mind to think for them (this is where the absolute mind comes in). The absolute mind in comparison to the regular human mind would be the equivalent to the microcosm and the macrocosm of the astronomers solar system. In other words, our minds would be a mini replica of the absolute mind. The absolute self has complete knowledge. The idealists believe that we should look inside ourselves to find what is genuinely real and true. It is also their opinion that the social function of the school is to 'preserve the heritage.' In other words, they believe school is to pass on the knowledge of the past. The realists do not believe in an absolute mind. Rather they believe that reality 'just is,' without any regard to what ever else might be going on. They believe that the world we see is the real world. It was Aristotle's view that we can obtain a better idea of universal ideas through the study of particular things or matter. Pragmatism is a child-centered philosophy. Teachers are aware that they do not 'know' what a student will need for the future, because the world is ever changing. It is the existentialist belief that we learn by trial and error (so to say). In other words, people learn by the choices they make and the results that those choices bring about."

(2) That my teaching strategies of collaborative group work, group presentations, web-assisted resources, assigned readings, video clips, are helping candidates gain an understanding of different schools of thought, and deeper convictions about their approaches to teaching. Some evidential comments include the like:

"Group presentations, group work. The group presentations helped in understanding the different philosophies. Clips from the different movies gave me a better understanding of the philosophies at work."
"I liked the variety of approaches. You used video clips. You had us give oral presentations, do research, use both group and individual work. You gave us an outline and freedom within that framework. We had handouts, power point presentations, video clips and overhead projectors for our oral presentations. The TPI test was a very good way to get insight into our philosophical bent. I believe that by working in groups we were able to gain a better understanding of the philosophic ideas. Also, by getting information from the WebCT on our own we were able to get a better understanding of the importance of technological usage in the classroom."
"The instructional method that was most beneficial to me was the opportunity to have the text that I needed on file in the library."
"I believe that the way that you made us learn about the different philosophies was very good because we had to do some research on our own and present it in our own way to the rest of the class, and when the different groups presented it to us we learned a lot. You also explained things to us and clarified different things to us during the presentations."
"Your emphasis on the inner self helped me to form my convictions. You, through various strategies, challenged us to take a look at what was really important to us and "dared" us to expand on that."
"Well, as previously stated, I believe that much of your teaching was primarily in guiding us. Most of the time we worked on our own. We were given choices on how to go about completing our tasks and we were offered the materials needed. In order for us to complete our tasks we had to be responsible and learn to cooperate and organize ourselves well in our groups. I believe that this taught me some of the ideas of the existentialist view of teaching, which just happened to be the philosophy I was most able to relate to. I want to let you know that I really enjoyed learning in your class. It was a new yet pleasurable experience."

I also intend that candidates acquire teamwork skills and dispositions in the course. As a result, I identify, with help from the candidates, the characteristics they and I see as germane to group participation. I then create a checklist of the habits identified, and have candidates rate their colleagues on the group participation habits (inadequate, adequate, outstanding) at different points in the semester. This process is similar to that recommended by Arthur Costa of ASCD for assessing and reporting on habits of mind. I am learning that opportunity to engage in group work is proving to be, for many candidates, a key learning vehicle even though outside group work presents some problems. Here are a cross-section of candidate comments:

> "Working in groups can make presentations more diverse and interesting."
> "Sharing gives opportunity to see things from different angles."
> "Working with others really opens new channels of understanding a subject."

"When group members attend meetings prepared, great things happen and good ideas are exchanged."
"Some people do not contribute and leave work until the last minute."
"Work, children, and so on, can get in the way of group meetings."

Conclusions

So what major conclusions may I draw from the course regarding standards, outcomes, alignment, and performance assessment an candidate learning?

1. That the standards for foundations of education can provide a useful context for deciding what candidates should know and understand in a foundations of education course. To do so, however, the focus must be on the related candidate proficiencies identified in the standards' principles.
2. That an interdisciplinary approach to the course is conducive to helping teacher education candidates focus on the process of foundational thinking while concurrently providing them with relevant ideas for classroom practice (New York State Foundations of Education Association, 1999). My end of course university evaluations, vis-à-vis its value for candidates, are some of the highest in the college. This contradicts certain studies that suggest the least rated course(s) in teacher preparation are the foundations of education course(s).
3. That by making standards public through the use of scoring guides (rubrics), candidates do not have to guess what the assignment expectations are. This reaffirms the findings of persons like Sherer and Thibodeau (2001) that "... rubric-guided assessment creates a vested interest in course evaluation processes and outcomes and contributes to [candidates] becoming empowered in their learning" (p. 9).
4. That candidates have very few questions about course evaluations. Each candidate receives a written course evaluation that is linked to the scoring rubrics. The evaluation serves as feedback for improvement on the course projects or other future projects.
5. That I am achieving greater curricular coherence as I align course design, and outcomes, instruction, field experiences and assessment of candidate learning.
6. That in utilizing performance assessment, one must pay attention to three things: 1) the definition of the performance task, 2) preparation of the task, and 3) a scoring system – rubrics (Stiggings, 1994). I am learning, like Colley (2201) that breaking down the performance tasks is enhancing my ability to concentrate on the things that are directly relevant to candidates accomplishing the learning task.
7. That since candidates' level of decision making vis-à-vis case analysis becomes more sophisticated in their use of professional knowledge as they progress through a teacher education program (Doebler, et al., 1998) the initial learning gained in this foundations course might be enhanced by further case analyses in later courses in the program. If done, then foundations of education knowledge would be integrated into content and methods courses.
8. That helping candidates to demonstrate their learning through course portfolios helps to move a foundations of education course from the realm of too theoretical to being quite relevant in this era of performance assessment.

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